

Draft V2

Crowe Valley Conservation Authority

Volunteer Policy

Adopted:

Effective:

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1.0 Preface

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority recognizes and values the contributions made by volunteers. Participation by volunteers has provided opportunities to promote, enhance and implement the CVCA's goals while providing service to the public. The stated goals of the CVCA include: monitoring and maintaining conservation areas for public enjoyment, educational opportunities and outdoor activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing.

In the past, there has been occasional public interest in assisting the organization through volunteerism primarily from individuals offering general volunteering "services". There have been certain incidents or situations where a group of individuals have approached the CVCA to offer to volunteer. For example, the illegal activities at the Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area (CRCA) sparked volunteers coming forward and several projects were undertaken to improve the situation.

Due to financial limitations and staffing resources available to the CVCA, management and the Board of Directors recognize volunteers will assist the CVCA to achieve goals which would otherwise be out of the reach of the Authority. Therefore, to create a safe working environment, ensure that all volunteer experiences are positive and encourage volunteers to work under the auspices of the CVCA for the benefit of the local community and visitors to CVCA properties, a formal Volunteer Policy is required. The goals of this policy are to attract more volunteers and to provide an opportunity for volunteers to grow and learn while supporting the conservation authority.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Description

Volunteering can be described as when someone spends unpaid time doing something to benefit others, an activity which takes place through organizations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- with no expectation of financial remuneration
- in designated volunteer positions only

2.2 Principles of Volunteering

1. Volunteering benefits the community by allowing individuals to connect with their community and make it a better place
2. Volunteering benefits the volunteer by:
 - a. helping them to make new friends
 - b. expanding networking capabilities
 - c. boosting social skills
 - d. improving overall physical and mental wellbeing
 - e. gaining credit for volunteer hours required for high school graduation

3. Volunteers do not expect nor receive monetary compensation
4. Volunteering is always a matter of choice
5. Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
6. Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work and cannot be used to replace paid positions
7. Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
8. Volunteering respects the environment and attempts to minimize negative impacts upon it

2.3 Motivations for Volunteering

People give a variety of reasons for their desire to become a volunteer. Some of these include:

- To help others or the community
- To achieve personal satisfaction
- To promote personal/family involvement
- To initiate or expand social contact
- To use and further develop skills/experience
- To be active
- To learn new skills/gain work experience
- To earn hours towards high school graduation requirements

2.4 Volunteer Governance

Good volunteer governance involves the following steps:

1. Recruitment
2. Selection and Screening
3. Training and Induction
4. Volunteer Management
5. Recognition and Rewards
6. Ongoing and regular communication

2.5 Purpose

The CVCA anticipates volunteers will likely play a pivotal role in the success of the management of the CVCA's land programs moving forward. Volunteers would allow for the successful development and implementation of programs that are currently out of the scope of the CVCA, such as outdoor education programs or new infrastructure for the public visitors to our conservation areas.

The purpose of this Policy document is to create a method for recruiting, screening, and selecting candidates, as well as training, utilizing, supervising, evaluating, and recognizing volunteers. This document will provide guidelines and methods for the effective delivery and management of an important resource for the CVCA.

2.6 Analyses

This Volunteer Policy will establish the volunteer management practices of the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority to address volunteering issues. For example, recruitment is a vital component which must be addressed. There is the need for basic training for new and returning volunteers. The lack of volunteer utilization needs to be changed. This document shall endeavour to assist in these and other areas of the volunteer component of the CVCA's day to day activities.

S.W.O.T. Analyses

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority has the flexibility and desire to work with volunteers for desirable outcomes that benefit both nature and our local community. • Currently, public interest in volunteerism with the CVCA seems to be increasing, due to the current situation at Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area, a growing concern about protecting the environment and an influx of people from urban areas to the watershed who are retired and looking to contribute to their new community. • Crowe Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors and management want to ensure volunteers have a positive, safe and inclusive volunteer experience. • The CVCA realizes the value of its volunteers and will work to convey its appreciation of them through various means of recognition. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CVCA under-utilizes its willing volunteers due primarily due to a lack of time by staff to formally train them and/or supervise their activities. • There is a lack of basic training with respect to the OHSA, AODA mandates. • Currently the organization's volunteer recognition and rewards program is minimal and should be boosted to better convey appreciation • In some instances, basic requirements associated with managing volunteers are not being met (e.g., ensuring volunteers have been fully trained, logging hours of volunteer efforts, 2-way feedback process regarding volunteers and those who supervise them, etc.).
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance to build a volunteer network and connect with the community. • Opportunity to increase public awareness and appreciation of Crowe Valley C.A. services through volunteer advocacy. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of employee time to manage volunteers. • Volunteers do not feel their talents or expertise are being used effectively. • Volunteers may feel under appreciated due to minimal recognition efforts.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to stretch donation dollars by having volunteers assist with CVCA projects. • Opportunity to mitigate risk by having a formalized volunteer program policy and procedures. • Opportunity to recognize and promote the good work done by volunteers through local and social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers feel a disconnect with the organization and other volunteers due to lack of training, fellowship, and/or interactivity. • Possibility of additional internal/external restrictions put on volunteers leading to volunteer fatigue and/or disgruntlement and leaving before projects are completed.
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2.7 Implementation

The implementation of this policy will further assist with the goals and objectives of the CVCA Watershed Based Strategy without incurring additional expenses.

3.0 Volunteer Portfolios

3.1 Positions Required

CVCA staff will be encouraged to identify opportunities for volunteerism within their program/department and what level of volunteerism is needed to fulfil these opportunities. These opportunities are to be communicated to the General Manager for further discussion and decision.

It’s important to note the differentiation between different types of volunteers for varying volunteer needs. Types of volunteers include:

- a) **Core Volunteers:** those individuals who are available and willing to volunteer for multiple events/projects on an annual basis. Core volunteers will have undergone an in-depth orientation process that includes OSHA and AODA training in addition to specific training. An annual review of this policy and related training modules will be implemented by staff.
- b) **One-time/infrequent Volunteers:** those individuals who volunteer on a one-time or infrequent basis. These volunteers will be introduced to a basic orientation that does include health and safety, accessibility and specific training as required.
- c) **Group Volunteers:** those businesses/organizations who provide individuals to volunteer with our organization on their behalf (e.g. service clubs, local businesses). These organizations in collaboration with CVCA staff are responsible for making sure that their volunteers meet the necessary threshold of training with respect to the OSHA and AODA as required.

3.2 Volunteer Opportunity Descriptions

The development of volunteer opportunity descriptions will allow volunteers to gain a better understanding, before signing-up, of the expectations that will be placed on them by the CVCA.

Volunteer opportunity descriptions will also allow authority staff to better connect specific positions with the skill sets of individuals.

3.3 Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteers will come from varied sources. As an example, they may be people from the local community, friends or relatives of employees and/or Board members, students interested in learning about the work of a conservation authority, etc.

Should the CVCA consider recruiting volunteers, the CVCA is 'selling itself' to potential helpers. Talking about the benefits of being associated with the organization is very important when communicating with potential volunteers. Again, it is important to consider the motivations for volunteering to create a clear message that can be used to recruit volunteers.

The CVCA Board recognizes finding volunteers involves an investment of time and effort by employees. Depending on time restraints due to current workload, the recruitment of volunteers may fall onto the shoulders of the public. In other words, given the current staff complement, the likelihood of actively pursuing volunteers will remain remote for the foreseeable future.

In identifying the methods most suitable for finding volunteers, the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority notes:

- Personal contact is customarily most successful.
- It is necessary to create an awareness of Crowe Valley Conservation Authority volunteer opportunities by effectively communicating the volunteer requirements of the organization through marketing strategies (e.g. utilizing social media) and personal interactions.

3.4 Selection and Screening

Volunteers must be screened to ensure that they understand the purpose and objectives of the organization and of the positions to be filled. Age limits might have to be considered depending on the nature and requirements of the activities.

In screening volunteers, the CVCA recognizes the importance of assessing the skills, experience and availability of potential volunteers, and/or their commitment to gathering the necessary, age-appropriate skills and experience, to match them to the needs of the organization.

It should be clear to prospective volunteers from the outset that they will be required to undergo a screening and orientation training process before a volunteer role can be offered. When conducted openly, these procedures send a positive message to potential volunteers that the organization is professional in its approach to volunteer management. The screening and orientation training process may also act as a deterrent to some applicants who may not be an appropriate fit for the organization.

The screening process should begin with consideration of what duties volunteers will be asked to perform and skills and experience required to perform them satisfactorily. The length of the volunteer commitment as well as the degree of risk and the trust required of volunteers will determine what level of screening should be used to adequately assess suitability for the role.

During the screening process staff will ensure that the candidates meet and possess any required documents needed for the successful completion of the assigned opportunity. This will include successful completion of Occupational Health and Safety Act and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act training (provided by CVCA), signing a waiver, providing emergency contact information and submission of the Volunteers for Conservation Registration Form. Additionally, volunteers may be required to provide a clear general and/or a vulnerable sector police records check.

3.5 Orientation and Training

The CVCA understands the importance of welcoming each of its new volunteers through an orientation process. The type of orientation process required for volunteers varies based on the individual's level of anticipated volunteer contribution/s and confirmed previous training and experience. Subjects which are to be communicated as part of the orientation process to new recruits include:

- Position descriptions
- Training requirements
- Volunteer Waiver forms
- Volunteer Emergency Contact form
- Codes of behaviour
- Emergency Procedures
- Other Forms and checks to be completed

For long term volunteer roles (versus volunteers for "one off" events) a variety of training must take place to aid in the development of a quality volunteer.

Initial training should involve at a minimum a background information session on the CVCA promoting the authority's key corporate message as well as an introduction to the variety of programs that take place within the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority. Mandatory training requirements include Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA).

Opportunity specific training will be completed by the volunteer's assigned supervisor. It is also the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all other applicable volunteer orientation and training requirements have been completed.

As part of the volunteer orientation process, volunteers will be provided with a form of identification.

3.6 Staff Access to Volunteers

To access a volunteer, staff will visit the [Volunteers](#) folder on the CVCA's server, and click on [Volunteer Contacts](#) to view the names, interests, availability and qualifications of current volunteers who may potentially be available to fulfill the need.

Additionally, staff may want to review the history of [Volunteer Activities](#) to determine which volunteers have experience providing the CVCA with same or similar volunteer needs as those being sought after.

In the case where staff have obtained volunteers outside of the current [Volunteers](#) database (e.g. a new family member, friend or associate) they must be willing to conduct the necessary Orientation as outlined in this plan to accommodate required training needs. Following approval and orientation training requirements staff must provide all necessary information and documentation to the General Manager for review. Staff will then be responsible for adding the new volunteer(s) to the Volunteers database if approved by the General Manager. No information from the data base will be shared beyond the CVCA staff without the written permission of the volunteer.

4.0 Volunteer Management

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority understands the importance of effectively managing its volunteers. Successful volunteer management helps to ensure that voluntary tasks are equitably distributed among volunteers and that the volunteer experience is beneficial to all involved. Feedback from both volunteers and staff is important to ensure volunteers and the CVCA are effectively achieving their goals. This feedback will be obtained through interviews, exit surveys, questionnaires, etc. Any CVCA staff supervising volunteers will be responsible to ensure volunteers are being utilized as identified and are conducting volunteer management protocols as outlined in this document.

4.1 Volunteer Rights

While volunteers are not covered by the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, *Workplace Safety & Insurance Act* or *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the CVCA still has the responsibility for the health and safety of people visiting or helping out in the workplace. Volunteers have the right to work in a healthy, safe environment free from any violence in the workplace, verbal, racial or sexual abuse as per the CVCA's current policies which address these issues. Volunteers will be provided with sufficient information and training in order to conduct their volunteer role(s) and to respond to alleged violence or abuse.

4.2 Volunteer Waiver Forms

It is imperative that the volunteer waiver form is signed by all volunteers prior to their start. This form ensures that they know their rights and the limitations of coverage provided by CVCA in the case of an accident. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring this form (as well as the parent/guardian form for minors) is completed prior to work starting.

4.3 Volunteer Evaluation/Feedback

Although volunteers are not employees of the CVCA, they do represent the organization and as such should have an evaluation conducted after each volunteer assignment. The supervisor of the volunteer is responsible for ensuring the evaluation form is completed and filed appropriately.

Likewise, the CVCA values its volunteers experience, hence, feedback as related to the assignment(s) and staff of the CVCA. As such, volunteers should be provided with a confidential feedback form to be completed by the volunteer and submitted to the General Manager for record.

The completion of a feedback form from the volunteer is optional while the completion of feedback by the volunteer's supervisor is mandatory. A copy of the feedback form will be provided, upon request, to the volunteer upon completion.

Feedback forms will be filed and kept for a minimum of 2 years. A volunteer receiving a copy of their feedback form may request a review of the form by the General Manager.

5.0 Volunteer Rewards and Recognition

In order to boost volunteer engagement, consistent recognition and appreciation of volunteers must be conducted. This will be accomplished primarily by verbal and/or written thanks to volunteers by their supervisors and/or the General Manager.

6.0 Resources

6.1 Volunteer Forms

Volunteer forms will be available on the server under:

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- Registration Form
- Waiver Form
- Emergency Contact Form
- Personal Information Consent Form
- Confidentiality Form
- Orientation Check List
- Evaluation Form (completed & submitted by supervisor)
- Volunteer's Feedback Form (completed & submitted by volunteer to the Volunteer Coordinator)

7.0 Revisions to the Volunteers for Conservation Program Plan

The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority Volunteers Policy will be reviewed and revised as required to address changes in legislation or emerging issues.